

STUDY OBJECTIVES (674 words)

Field of Study: International Relations

To many of my generation, the United States is a hate-and-love nation. Relations with this superpower are ones of the most sensitive in the Vietnam foreign policy. That is why I want to pursue a graduate program in International Relations, focusing on the U.S. foreign policy toward Vietnam and International Trade Law.

I think that Vietnam needs to handle well its relationship with the United States in order to facilitate its other relations and integration. Vietnam should understand how the U.S. perceives itself and its role in the world. The bilateral relationship seems to be progressing well on all fronts. Yet, these positive developments came only in the past decade. As a young person growing up after the war, I could not explain such a phenomenon because I see Vietnamese people as friendly and open-minded, and many Americans I have met are kind and generous. There must be something more than mere sufferings from the war by both sides.

Watching the progress of the Vietnam-U.S. relations over the past few years, I am again baffled by conflicts over human rights, religious freedom, catfish and shrimp. It seems to me the U.S. is de facto practicing double standards in both politics and trade, particularly in relations with less developed partners. With regard to Vietnam, I want to learn what the U.S. really wants from the relations with Vietnam, apart from the past shared history. Who else can better tell me about the U.S. perspectives of Vietnam than the Americans themselves! I believe it is extremely helpful for me to hear American professionals explain how American policymakers view and project Vietnam in their strategies.

My interest in International Trade Law is motivated by the argument that international law does not exist and international institutions are governed by U.S. rules, be it the UN, WB, IMF or WTO. From the Vietnam catfish and shrimp experience, as well as the failure of the Cancun Round, I believe that globalization is just another name for the "Americanization" of the world or the vehicle of the rich and powerful. Mystified by this perception, I am not really sure if I want Vietnam to join the WTO now. I wish to examine WTO regulations and practices to see whether Vietnam is ready for it and how much U.S. influence exists within that realm. I believe that an understanding of international trade law from the American perspective will help Vietnamese enterprises attempting to do business in the U.S. to be better prepared for the legal twists and turns they might have to deal with, and be more receptive to U.S. businesses coming to Vietnam.

With that in mind, I am confident that the two-year study program in the United States will be beneficial for me in both professional and personal terms. I am sure the Vietnam-U.S. relations will unfold with more complicated issues requiring better-informed decisions. What I have been doing at work in the past years has been helpful but was more in the nature of on-the-spot training and self-teaching. I feel it is time for me to take a full-time systematic training and research if I want to further advance my career,

and I do. I know the study will be hard, but I am more than ready to take on the challenge because the knowledge and skills to be acquired, if I am granted the scholarship, will certainly improve my analytical skills. This will boost my confidence in making recommendations to my boss on international relations issues, particularly on Vietnam-U.S. relations. The training will then help me become a more value-added asset to my organization.

My training in the U.S. will not only help me understand the U.S. better but also give me a chance to share the Vietnamese perspectives and hopefully, to present a truer image of today's Vietnam. The balanced two-way exchanges can show both nations where to go from here. This is the value of the Fulbright Program as "the avenue of hope" that I find unique and would like to experience if given a chance.